

GIORDANO BRUNO

ALOIS RIEHL

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Giordano Bruno. In memoriam of the 17th



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GIORDANO BRUNO
BY ALOIS RIEHL



MONUMENT TO BRUNO IN ROME

GIORDANO BRUNO

IN MEMORIAM OF THE
17TH FEBRUARY 1600

BY
ALOIS RIEHL

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
WITH THE AUTHOR'S PERMISSION, BY

AGNES FRY



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

I HAVE made a few corrections in this essay, which first appeared in 1889, and have entirely remodelled the account of Bruno's philosophy.

I hope that I have thus presented, in the narrow limits of this paper, a true, and in its main outlines a complete, picture of the teaching and the fate of the remarkable man whose memory will be revived on 17th January of this year, in all places where there is a lively appreciation of true nobility of character and the love of truth that can despise death.

HALLE AM SAALE,
January 1900.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

IN "Nature," 24th May 1900, p. 77, is a review of the work which I have translated in the following pages. The reviewer wrote: "Bruno's life and work are alike memorable. Few, however, of those to whom the romantic wander-years and heroic death appeal have leisure and training to grapple with the technical Latin and hard Italian of the versatile and strong Nolan. The tercentary, therefore, of Bruno's tragedy can have no memorial more fitting than Professor Alois Riehl's 'Giordano Bruno.' Would that it were in English!" The wish thus expressed is the origin of the present translation.

Some pages of the philosophical part of this translation were submitted in MS. to a friend of the author's, whom I have to thank for various corrections. My thanks are also due to the Rev. Hastings Rashdall, D.D., for his kind-

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ness in going over the whole and offering many valuable suggestions and corrections ; also to my father, Sir Edward Fry, for much help and advice.

There is an English life of Bruno, by I. Frith : it forms the thirty-first volume of the English and Foreign Philosophical Library, published by Trübner & Co. Bruno's works have been collected and published at Leipzig (*Opere de Giordano Bruno, Nolano : ora per la prima volta raccolte e publicate da Adolfo Wagner, dottore : in due volumi : Lipsea, Weidmann, 1830*).

Vol. I. contains : Introduction by Wagner ; *Il Candelajo ; La Cena de le Ceneri ; De la Causa, Principio ed Uno*. Vol. II. : *De l'Infinito Universo e Mondi ; Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante ; Cavallo del Cavallo Pegaseo ; De gli Eroici Furori* (dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney). In 1888 a new edition of his works was brought out by Paolo de Lagarde at Göttingen (*Dieterische*

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Universitätsbuchhandlung L u d e r
Horstmann).

“*La Cena de le Ceneri*”—with its vivid descriptions of the abundance of English mud and the scarcity of English manners—is also published in the “*Biblioteca Rara*” of O. Daelli & Co., Milan, 1864. I have ventured to add to the translation a few notes, which are indicated by my initials.

AGNES FRY.

FAILAND, 1905.

I

IN the richest district of Campania, which is known as "the happy," there lies the town of Nola, situated on the N.E. slopes of Vesuvius, and distant about twelve miles from Naples. An old settlement of Chalchidean Greeks, in the time of the Empire it was a flourishing and important place, surrounded by walls and towers, and adorned with the palaces of the most distinguished Roman families ; to-day it is a little provincial town of some 12,000 inhabitants.

Here, more than elsewhere in Magna Grecia, traces of old Greek manners and customs survived to a later age. Certain ancient usages at solemn processions and games, an appreciation of beauty of form, even a certain pleasure in witty and well-chosen speech might recall their history ; and perhaps the unusual aptitude for philosophy, literature and art which appear again and

again among the inhabitants may also be traced back to their Greek origin. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the town of Nola was remarkable as the birthplace or the residence of a comparatively large number of men of a certain distinction: humanists, philosophers, poets and artists. But all these are thrown into the shade by the fame of a man who, notable alike in his fate and in the greatness of his mind and thought, has made the name of his parent city renowned throughout the world. Giordano Bruno delighted to call himself the "Nolan"; and a strong feature in his character, as in that of his fellow-citizens, was his attachment to home.

At the time at which Giordano Bruno was born, the art of the Renaissance in Italy had already passed its zenith, and the splendour of that half-heathen life at the court of the Medicean popes had already waned. Ecclesiastical interests on the one hand, and scientific interests

on the other, had supplanted the æsthetic.

It is the time of the Catholic reaction and the creation of modern science. At the instigation of Ignatius Loyola, and at the special desire of Caraffa, Paul III., by the Bull of 21st July 1542, instituted the Roman Inquisition on the pattern of the Spanish, and in the spring of 1543 there appeared Nicholas Copernicus' work, "*De Orbium Cœlestium Revolutionibus, Libri VI.*" Under the constellation of these two events, Bruno was born in 1548: their subsequent interaction determined the tragic fate of the philosopher.

Bruno's father, Giovanni, was a soldier; an officer, we may assume; for the Bruni of Nola, a branch, perhaps, of the patrician family of like name at Asti, were no inconsiderable family in the town, and Giovanni was on friendly terms with the poet Tansillo, who was of distinguished family. The philosopher's

mother was named Fraulissa, and her family name was Savolina. He himself was named Philip at his baptism, after the son of the lord of the soil. An expedition up Vesuvius, made during his childhood, produced a lasting impression on Bruno. The mountain had seemed to his childish mind to be the boundary of the world, and in the distance it looked bare and monotonous : as he approached, he found it covered with elms and oaks whose branches were interwoven with richly-laden vines, and turning back he saw that the hill Cicala, at the foot of which his father's house stood, looked small and distant, as Vesuvius had looked thence. And then Bruno learnt with surprise for the first time that our eyes deceive us : he saw that as we advance we always carry the centre of our horizon with us : and the thought took root in his mind that Nature everywhere is one and the same, and distance alone alters the appearance of things.

And thus his inner perceptions began to expand beyond the limits of the outward and sensible. At about the age of ten, the boy, now fully awake to all that was going on around him, came to Naples, where he was instructed in the humanities, logic and dialectics. He has handed down to us the name of his teacher in this philosophic learning, Fra Teofilo da Veranno. In 1563, when he had not yet completed his fifteenth year, he entered the monastery of St Dominic in Naples; and here Bruno received the name of Giordano, which he bore with one single intermission throughout his life. This being the name of St Dominic's immediate successor, the second *magister generalis* of the order, its bestowal upon Bruno was perhaps an indication of the hopes placed by the order in the capacities of its new member. In the cloister Bruno acquired that deep and wide knowledge of the older philosophy which appears

in all his writings. He was also occupied with the study of scholasticism. After Raymond Lully, his favourite author was Thomas Aquinas, a member of his own order, who three hundred years before had lived and taught in the same monastery in which Bruno passed his novitiate. In the cloister too, under the pressure of his surroundings, self-reliance came to his powerful spirit. If Bruno had hoped that his life as a friar would give him undisturbed leisure for those studies to which he gave himself with such fresh enthusiasm, he must soon have discovered to his surprise "how his censors endeavoured to withdraw him from worthier and higher occupations, to lay his spirit in chains, and from a free man in the service of virtue to make him the slave of a miserable and foolish system of deceit." Moreover, the weaknesses and extravagances of some of his convent brethren did not escape his sharp sight,

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or his satiric humour, and later on he gives us striking portraits of the melancholy Hortensio, the thin Serafino, and the inflated Bonifacio, as types which may doubtless be found elsewhere in convent life. And Bruno must soon have turned in disgust from these companions, who had nothing but contempt for a mind full of the ferment of thought, and not over-apt at concealment. Even in his novitiate he was threatened with an accusation of heresy. He had removed pictures of saints from his cell, and only retained a crucifix, and when one day he came upon a brother reading a poem on the "Seven Joys of Mary," he begged him to occupy himself with a more sensible book instead. But this time it went no further than a threat.

In his eighteenth year, as he himself mentions, he began to have doubts about the ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity. He conceived the Persons as attributes of the Godhead, and appealed to Augus-

tine, who had considered the word "Person" still an innovation, and only employed it with reservation. But Bruno's acquaintance with the work of Copernicus was to be the decisive point in his spiritual development; indeed, in his whole life. This acquaintance must have been made comparatively early ("at the door of the young man's mind the rousing word of Copernicus knocked"), but after twenty years the impression of it is still lively within him. He felt himself suddenly freed from chains. Truth, which he now seemed to see, or, rather, thought to grasp with his hands, appeared to him to have dwelt hitherto in the fabled spheres of the heavens. Great was his admiration of the noble-minded German¹ discoverer who, careless of the folly of the crowd, remained steadfast against the mighty

¹ Copernicus is generally spoken of in England as a Pole. His father, a native of Cracow, had settled at Thorn in Prussia at the time of his son's birth.—A. F.

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onrush of a contrary belief. Bruno appropriated the new teaching as something most closely akin to his own spirit, a truth that was inborn in his mind. Henceforth he was master of the new theory, and free to amplify and continue it. With a calm consistency he laid aside the last bonds from which even Copernicus had not been free, "the fixed sphere," "the bowl and convex superficies" of the firmament. His spirit dares the flight through the opened heavens, the infinity of the universe discloses itself to his glance, and "the beauty of the world shone bright upon him." So Bruno took possession of the new learning not with his intellect alone; he gave himself up to it with all his senses, all his powerful imagination, and all the enthusiasm of his being, and the mediæval Church's concept of the world dissolved before his eyes like a phantom. The new cosmology demanded, as he saw, a new

metaphysic and a new theology ; and to fashion and proclaim this was, as he believed, his vocation and his mission. He drew the elements of his philosophy principally from Neo-Platonism and from the profound writings of Nicolas da Cusa, and in the latter especially he recognized a kindred spirit, whose activity was only fettered by his priestly garments.

But the leisure of his life in the cloister was not exclusively dedicated to deep philosophic studies and projects ; he gave himself also to poetry, both grave and gay. His comedy "Il candelaio" originated at this period, and doubtless many also of those sacred songs which he introduced later in the dialogues, "Degli heroici furori." A satiric poem, "Noah's Ark," dedicated to the Pope, appeared in 1570. — The poem itself has disappeared, but we are acquainted with its subject from a later dialogue ; the donkey is in danger of losing his pre-

eminence among the other animals and struggles to retain it.

Meanwhile Bruno's outer life had conformed to the usual course. He took holy orders, and in 1572, in his twenty-fourth year, he said his first mass in the town of Campagna, and passed some time there in the monastery of St. Bartholomew, and later in other monasteries of the province, where he performed priestly functions, saying mass, preaching, and so forth. After three years he returned to the convent at Naples. His play "Il candelaio," that mirror of the depravity which surrounded him, presents almost visibly before our eyes the kind of man with whom he came in contact at this time and the state of things which he saw.

There is no doubt that Bruno was already estranged from the doctrine of the Church, when his monastic life came to an abrupt, though hardly an unexpected, end. Fra Domenico Vito, the

Provincial of his order, brought the charge of heresy against him in one hundred and thirty articles. Bruno was in Rome in the della Minerva monastery. It seems that he had foreseen the accusation, and had thought to escape the Spanish Inquisition at Naples, but came thereby in danger of handing himself over to that of Rome, for after a very few days the documents in the process were sent thither. And, moreover, as Bruno learnt from his friend's letters to him, forbidden books which he had stowed away at his departure had been discovered :—it is true that these were works of Chrysostom and Jerome, but they were annotated by Erasmus, and the possession of them must bring him into still deeper suspicion. And so with sudden determination, after laying aside the dress of his order, he escaped from Rome in the middle of 1576, being then in his twenty-eighth year.

With his flight from Rome Bruno

began a life of constant wandering, which lasted for fifteen years, and carried him over half Europe. Everywhere he sought to plant his doctrine, the new conception of the universe. But the mental restlessness which beset him would not permit him to find any permanent sphere for his activity. Moreover, ill luck and the persecution of his enemies followed him everywhere. His life was a constant struggle against the caste of scholars, but he brought this conflict upon himself by his manner of approaching them. Wherever he comes, his impetuosity arouses opponents. The boisterous zeal with which he champions his philosophy contrasts sharply with the indifference displayed by other philosophers towards their own teachings. These other philosophers, he supposes, have not discovered so much, and therefore have less to guard and to defend than he. "They indeed may hold a philosophy cheap,

which is worth nothing, or one that they are not acquainted with ; but he who has found the Truth, the hid Treasure, is enchanted with the beauty of her countenance, and jealous lest she be misrepresented, slighted, or profaned.”

But in the midst of this restless life he created the masterpieces of his philosophy : the Italian dialogues—those free and rich outpourings of his mind, and the Latin writings, full of poetic rhapsody and metaphysical depth,—as well as the numerous treatises on Lully’s teaching. And with that industry, which is proper to genius, he multiplied his powers.

After his flight we next come upon Bruno at Noli near Genoa. Here he instructed boys in grammar, and gave discourses on astronomy to a few young people of good position. After a few months he made his way by Savona and Turin to Venice, where he arrived at a

time of confusion and dismay. The plague which was devastating all north Italy, except Turin, was raging in the town. One half of the inhabitants fell victims to the pestilence : among them Titian, who was almost in his hundredth year, died of the infection. In order to make a little money, Bruno printed one of his writings, "The Signs of the Times," after he had submitted the work to Father Remigius of Florence for examination. This little work, a forerunner perhaps of the writings on Lully, is lost. After a short stay, Bruno wandered away from the depopulated city ; and, arrived at Bergamo, he followed the advice of the brothers of his order whom he had met in Padua, and again adopted the monastic habit before setting forward on his pilgrimage.

At last, three years after his flight from Rome, he left Italy. In Chambéry he found shelter in the monastery of his order, but was received with suspicion,

and determined to make his way to Geneva. Here he fell in with a whole colony of Italian refugees, who recognized the reformed teaching, and at whose head was the Marquis Galeazzo Carracioli, a nephew of Paul IV. The Marquis received the victim of the Inquisition in a not unfriendly manner, and insisted that Bruno must change the monastic habit, which he never wore again, for secular garments. He made a living by correcting proofs for the press. From time to time he attended the preachings of his countrymen who belonged to the Reformed Church, but his formal submission to it, never alluded to by himself, is by no means fully proved, even by the documents published by Dufour. In the register of the Rector of the Academy his name appears written in his own hand as "Philippus Brunus Nolanus, sacræ theologiæ professor," and before long his tactless zeal was to involve him

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in disputes with a fellow member of the Academy. His ardent temperament misled him into the production of a pamphlet attributing the commission of twenty errors in a single lecture to the Professor of Philosophy, Antoine de la Faye. This attack on one of the most influential personages in Geneva involved him (and his printer) in imprisonment, and he only obtained his freedom by withdrawing his pamphlet. After having spent rather more than three months there, he left the intolerant city of Calvin, where twenty-six years previously Servetus had been sent to the scaffold. He made his way by Lyons to Toulouse, which was at this time the seat of a flourishing university frequented by ten thousand students. Bodin, the celebrated teacher of civil law, had come from Toulouse, and shortly after Bruno, François Sanchez, one of the revivers of Scepticism, taught here. Bruno

soon made himself known by private lectures on the "Sphere," or Astronomy, and he obtained the degree of Doctor of Roman Theology in order that he might become a candidate for an ordinary chair of philosophy. He received the professorship, which, according to his own statement, he held for two years, "writing and teaching," till finally the Civil War, which Henry of Navarre had provoked, compelled him to abandon it. He then turned his eyes towards Paris, which he reached about the middle of 1581.

Bruno immediately availed himself of the rights conferred by his degree of Doctor of Theology and announced an "extraordinary" lecture, choosing a scholastic theme for his subject. He won great applause: his eloquence and especially his powerful memory were greatly admired; but he was obliged to decline an "ordinary" professorship which was offered to him in Paris, for

the duty of hearing mass was essential to a professor, and this was impossible to him as an excommunicated person. Nevertheless, the report of his wonderful gifts reached the King. Henry III., who was superstitiously inclined, summoned the philosopher before him, in order to learn whether his memory was a natural gift, or whether it was not, as the King suspected, a matter of magic. Bruno succeeded in establishing the natural character of his memory, and in order to reveal the secret of his power in this respect, he dedicated "The Shadows of Ideas" to the King. An extraordinary professorship was the reward for this dedication.

"The Shadows of Ideas" inaugurates Bruno's series of writings on the Lullist doctrine, two more of which were to appear in Paris itself. These writings are comparable to an airy swarm accompanying his chief philosophic works: with them he introduces himself to the

universities, or he presents them to distinguished patrons. But when this is done, he does not consider their part is over. It is well known what exaggerated importance Raymond Lully, the Spanish schoolman of the thirteenth century, had attached to his discovery of a purely mechanical scheme of logic, whereby all possible combinations of conceptions could be represented in an absolutely mechanical manner. In this "great art" Bruno saw chiefly a means of fluency and of the exercise of memory. His occupation with Lully's art certainly did not create the qualities which mark his style—the rare skill in connecting remote ideas, the full and appropriate descriptions and the copious imagery which are at his command; but these were doubtless developed and strengthened thereby. Moreover, "The Shadows of Ideas" contains more than mere directions for the cultivation of memory by

Lully's method. The first part of this essay contains the earliest announcement of Bruno's philosophy, a scientifically theoretic foundation of it. The relation between our mental concepts and things, and between things and their creative first principle, is considered under symbolic forms borrowed from the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's "Republic," and under the imagery of light and shadow in which the similitude and the idea act and re-act on each other. The inner essential unity of the universe is strongly insisted on; so too is the principle of development. As Nature within her sphere produces everything from everything else, and by slow steps changes the lower into the higher, so the understanding also is able to recognize all in all. But man's perception can grasp the truth only in reflections of the True: hence the title "Shadows of Ideas."

In Paris, Bruno gave a further proof of

the many-sided nature of his genius. "Il Candelaio," which we have mentioned before, appeared in the same year (1582) as the "Shadows of Ideas": it is one of the best plays of its kind, though its kind is not of the best. The contents are in accord with the taste of the Italian Comedy of the Renaissance, and are as unsavoury as those of Cardinal Bibbiena's "Calandra": in form it is a realistic representation of things as they are, with no reluctance to contemplate even the ugliest. Moreover, the want of unity in execution diminishes the artistic value of the work.

Bruno himself mentions five years as the period of his stay in Paris. In reckoning thus, he must have included his two visits to Paris and his journey, on leave of absence, to England. For in the spring of 1583 he was already in England, and in June of the same year we find him in Oxford, his lectures in Paris having been interrupted this time by

civic disturbances and not by the attacks of his colleagues. He obtained leave of absence and arrived in England with a letter of introduction from the King to Michael de Castelnau, Lord of Mauvissière, the French Ambassador in London. Bruno's object in this journey was not merely to learn to know the land and its people, but also to acquaint the learned world of England with his doctrine and to win them over to the Copernican system. He found a patron in Castelnau; the French Ambassador was the political opponent of Elizabeth and the defender of Mary Stuart, whom he had conducted to Scotland after the death of Francis II., but his skilful diplomatic address and his personal advantages nevertheless secured him such favour with the Queen of England that she was much grieved when he was recalled from his post in 1585, after ten years' service. In his house Bruno lived when in London, and in grati-

tude for his hospitality he dedicated his three first Italian dialogues to Castelnau, "the only protector of the Muses." But we must not read into this dedicatory letter too personal a friendship between the French and Catholic nobleman and the apostate monk: exaggerations were part of the dedicatory style.

We hear of Bruno's other experiences in England from the writings which he published in London. He next made his way to Oxford, where he introduced himself to the University in a very self-conscious style with his paper on Lully entitled, "Explanation of the Thirty Seals." He discoursed on the immortality of the soul, introducing in his own fashion Pythagorean myths of re-incarnation: and he discoursed on Copernicus' new scheme of the universe. Naturally he was soon at war with the professors; and the hitherto undreamed-of assertion of innumerable solar sys-

tems in an infinite endless universe gave special offence, and aroused tumultuous opposition. Bruno defended his cosmological innovations against certain doctors of theology in an open disputation held to celebrate the visit of the Polish Prince, John Alasco, to Oxford in June 1583. In this war of words he claims the victory for himself : but the result which most affected him was the prohibition of continuing his lectures.

In the summer of the same year he returned to London, where, in Castelnau's house, he composed his Italian dialogues, while the impression of his Oxford experiences was still fresh. He appeared frequently at Court, either with the French Ambassador, or alone. Elizabeth, who loved to show her facility in Italian, enjoyed conversing with him, and he, on his side, celebrated the queen in the ornate style of the times ; she is the great Amphitrite, in allusion

to her island realm ; or she is the only Diana, and an earthly divinity. Nor is Bruno unsusceptible to the beauty of the English ladies. He extols them as the Muses and roving nymphs of England ; he praises their fair hair, the grace of their forms, and the expression of their faces. Of the men whom he met at Court, he came specially in contact with Philip Sidney, the brilliant statesman and poet, who shortly afterwards, when only thirty-two years old, lost his life at Zutphen while fighting for the independence of the Netherlands. To him Bruno dedicated his "Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast" (a book which as soon as it had appeared became the subject of a strange myth), and the dialogues concerning "The Heroic Enthusiasm," the "lofty song" of his philosophy, as he himself has called it. Bruno had a true perception of the political significance of England ; and he foresaw the union of the whole of

the British islands in one kingdom. But much that he witnessed in London excited his utmost dislike; and with his vehement want of consideration he blamed the barbarous manners of the crowd, and their unprovoked roughness to strangers. Nor could he accustom himself to the cold sky of England; and even the speech of the country sounded so strange and uncouth to him that he scorned to learn it. He was compelled to lie in hiding after the publication of the "Ash Wednesday Supper," the paper which gave rise to his sharp disputes with the pedants of Oxford and with the London mob. It seemed that he had offended not one town only or one province, but a whole kingdom. One and all, he complained, were ill-disposed towards him. And yet the few years that he passed in England were the happiest of his life and the time when his pleasure in producing his works was keenest. With the exception

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of his "Candelaio," all his Italian works were composed and published in London, and his Latin masterpiece, the poem "De immenso," was also begun here.

II

BRUNO was one of the first philosophers of modern times to handle scientific questions in a living language as the ancients had done. Montaigne preceded him by only a few years with his "Essais" : and Galileo imitated his example later on. Yet Bruno's practice is by no means certain or decided : inasmuch as for the purpose of teaching he relies exclusively on his Latin works, and even for his Italian writings the form which he chose seems to indicate that he aimed in these at a popular, rather than at a scientific, presentation of his philosophy. The humanists had already imitated the dialogues of Cicero, who was himself an imitator : and Bruno was acquainted with Plato's dialogues, although he understood but little Greek. But it was independently of these learned models that his dialogues arose, either as a reproduction of an actual discourse,

as in the dialogues "La Cena de le Ceneri" (The Ash Wednesday Supper), or because the form of a dialogue is specially suited to the contents of the work, as in "De l'infinito Universo e Mondi," where two conceptions of the Universe are seen at strife. Moreover, the conversational form would easily suggest itself when the language of actual intercourse was employed for a written statement. Bruno uses dialogue in an easy, unconstrained, and conversational manner, though his poetic gifts sometimes intensify the style. But in this form of mutual intercourse, how manifold are the means of expression which he employs, and the tones which he strikes! Grave, earnest, and lightsome frolic, learned disquisition and vivid representation, satire and caustic rebuke—there is no expression of passion or of quiet thought which is not at his command. Verse alternates with prose—in "De gl'heroici furori"

for instance. The construction of the verse is skilful, sometimes artificial, and the thought for the most part overweighs the slight form. Much is conventional in his style, and his taste is the barocco of the late Italian Renaissance, especially in the superabundant use of mythology, but in spite of all these blemishes the originality of his mind shines forth in all his writings. At the head of Bruno's works which appeared in London stand the dialogues "*La Cena de le Ceneri*" (The Ash Wednesday Supper), so called from the occasion which gave rise to them. Sir Fulke Grevil, a friend of Sidney's, had invited Bruno on the evening of Ash Wednesday, 1584, in order to hear the philosopher defend the doctrine of the earth's motion, and the narrative of the discussion of this subject during the meal forms the chief content of the so-called dialogue. But the Copernican system, enlarged by Bruno's universal and vivid

conception of it to a new view of the universe, is its real topic—all else is merely setting or episode. Considered merely as the forerunner of Galileo's dialogue, "The Two Chief Systems," this work of Bruno is very remarkable. A comparison of the two shows much agreement in detail: for instance, Bruno sets aside the objection that the rotation of the earth would necessarily produce a perceptible contrary movement of the air, with the observation that the air also belongs to the earth and must rotate with it. The philosopher's work cannot indeed be compared in scientific accuracy with that of the great physicist, but on the other hand it gains in its lofty point of observation whence the range of view includes not the solar system only, but the whole universe. Together with the Dialogues, "Concerning the Infinite, the Universe, and the Worlds," the Ash Wednesday discourses contain Bruno's cosmology:

only in a few respects does his Latin work, "*De immenso et innumerabilibus*," complete and improve the philosopher's picture of the universe.

There is in truth—so Bruno teaches—only one heaven, one immeasurable space and womb which comprehends all things, one ethereal realm wherein all things circulate. In this universal space shine countless stars, in themselves suns, or rather solar systems, since every star is encircled, like our sun, by planets, or, as Bruno more vividly says, by earths. There are but two kinds of heavenly bodies,—self-luminous or suns, and illuminated, or earths,—and the reason why we only see the sun of other systems is the vastness of their distance and the minuteness of their planets. Seen from a like distance our sun would show merely as a sparkling star. All determination of place in the universe is relative only : none of all these stars is in the centre of the whole,

but each is the centre of *its* whole, of *its* heaven. In this sense there are therefore countless heavens, as many in number as are the stars. As the moon belongs to the earth's heaven, just so, and in no other way, does the earth belong to the heaven of the moon : as we look up to the moon, so do the inhabitants of the moon, whose heads are opposite ours, look up at us. In the universe there can be no above and no below, except relatively. And as the determination of place in the universe is to be understood relatively, so are also lightness and weight : no body is heavy in itself, it is only in relation to its centre of attraction. It strikes us almost as a presage of the doctrine of universal gravitation, when Bruno explains that the heavenly bodies swing free in space and retain their relative positions by their mutually attractive force. The sun turns on its axis as every other fixed star moves on its

centre. By this means Bruno strives to explain the twinkling of the stars. Besides the rotation on its axis, the sun has another movement forwards in space: Bruno seems to be already aware of this, because he regards the distance of the fixed stars from the sun as differing with time. He knows of sun spots from Nicolas de Cusa: he endeavours to explain them on the undoubtedly false supposition¹ that the body of the sun is dark and only its atmospheric envelope luminous. A happier assertion, and one that sounds prophetic, is that there are more planets belonging to our sun than were known at the time. Comets, Bruno declares, before Tycho Brahé, pass without opposition through the supposed spheres to which the planets were then thought to be attached—a visible proof of the non-existence of these crystal shells.

¹ It may at least be open to question whether this supposition can be considered as “undoubtedly false.”—A. F.

Bruno's world is, as we now know, the real world. It should never be forgotten that the true constitution of the Cosmos showed itself first to his mind. If Columbus is so greatly celebrated because he, fulfilling the prophecy of old times, discovered a new hemisphere, what praise, asks the Philosopher, with justifiable pride, is meet for him, who has urged his way into heaven itself and there discovered worlds without number? Bruno thoroughly realised this new way of considering the world: could we (he says) remove ourselves further and ever further from the earth, we should see it changing more and more before our eyes to the likeness of a star. This ball, this star! Look up to the shining sparks and know that each is a world as this is: and all men, he prophesies, will one day see what he sees.

Bruno fills in this outline of his cosmology with colour and life. Every-

where throughout the universe the matter of nature is the same, and everywhere the same creative power is at work. One order, one law, reigns in the whole universe. And therefore Bruno does not doubt that everywhere organic life develops in countless gradations and forms, akin to those on earth, or even higher. Only a fool could believe that in endless space and on those mighty and glorious worlds there should be nothing more than the light which they send to us. Rather is every one of these worlds inhabited by living beings; nay more, each one as a whole is itself a great creature or organism. In the different parts of the material world all forms come into being, all kinds of organisms are actual in Nature as a whole, and herein consists the perfection of the universe. Bruno's spirit grows inspired with this view of the teeming world; this thought reconciles him to the evil of existence, to decline and decay in individuals. As

all flows from the good, so all is good, and through goodness will be led to the good. Truly, he who fixes his gaze on the details alone cannot take in the beauty of the whole, just as the beauty of a building escapes him who lets his eye rest merely on a part, a stone, or an ornament.

This is that Philosophy, Bruno exclaims, which opens the senses, gives peace to the mind, ennobles the understanding, and points to the true blessedness which man can reach as man, while it frees him from the toilsome care for pleasure and the blind fear of pain. It was a new and universal life that revealed itself overpoweringly to Bruno's mind and awakened a sympathy with all existence. How mean now seemed the habit of man of referring everything to his own well-being !

This teaching of the existence of other worlds was the first fatal blow to the mediæval anthropocentric conception

of the universe: for with this conception the doctrines of the earth's movement round the sun could, if need were, have been harmonized.

Bruno called himself the worshipper of the Infinite, and his mind was more inspired by that infinity of the world which he had assumed than by all else. Without perceiving the contradiction in the assumption of a completed infinity, Bruno inferred from the boundlessness of space and the unlimited nature of the creative principle the infinity of the world. Is it possible that our imagination, which is able to add number to number, quantity to quantity, and form to form, should be able to exceed creative Nature herself? Must not all, of which the creative force is capable, become real, be real? Must not potential and actual existence, possibility and actuality, here coincide? And were it not unworthy to suppose that such a power, being able to create an infinite

world, should only have created a finite one? Rightly does Bruno deny that the world of sense is hemmed in by absolute barriers ; he errs in holding this denial as equivalent to the assertion of its infinity. The antinomy between these prepositions, which presents itself at the very outset of the dialogue "De l'Infin-ito" in the question and counter question of the speakers, was first resolved by the intellectual acumen of Kant.

It is in his conception of the Cosmos that the novelty, the greatness, and the originality of his philosophy appear. But what is now for most of us merely a matter of knowledge, was for Bruno the subject of a fiery passion, of a religious sentiment and overpowering conviction. If the doctrine of Copernicus is heliocentric, Bruno's teaching is not merely cosmocentric, rather it is theocentric. Wheresoever we may be, everywhere alike we are near to our true centre : the Godhead. Nay, more,

the latter is inwardly present to us, as we are inwardly present to ourselves. God is the basis of Nature, the common essence of all existence, "therefore it is well said that in Him we live and move and have our being." Creative Nature is God in individual things (*Natura est Deus in rebus*). God "is the proper nature, the inner principle of all movement, the constructive form, the soul of all which His power vivifies. We seek God in the unchangeable, unalterable laws of Nature ; in the reverential disposition of a mind directed towards this law : we seek Him in the light of the sun, in the beauty of all that springs from the bosom of Mother Earth, in the true reflection of His Being, in the sight of unnumbered stars which shine on the immeasurable skirts of the one heaven and live and feel and think and magnify the All-Good, the All-One, the Highest." So runs Bruno's hymn to God-Nature.

With thoughts, which Spinoza has repeated, Bruno sought to approach the Idea of God. "In God, freedom and necessity, volition and action, power and being are one and the same. God is absolutely infinite, His being excludes all limits, and each of His attributes is infinite."

But Bruno does not allow individual existence to be lost in the unity of the all. The creative power, which manifests its inner infinity in producing worlds without number, is at the same time the source of a development which passes into infinity in each individual. Nothing becomes nothing, but all becomes all. "We ourselves, and the things which we call our own, come and vanish, and return again, and there is nothing which does not become strange to us, nor any strange thing that does not become our own." We feel the opposition to Nietzsche's Eternal monotony of the "Eternal return of the like."

In his chief metaphysical work, the dialogues "Concerning Cause, Principle and Unity," Bruno sought to prove propositions which can only be held as philosophic dogmas. This work immediately preceded the dialogues on the Infinite, and stands in close relation to them. Bruno remarks that what was sown at the close of the metaphysical work bears fruit in the cosmological. In other words, Bruno's metaphysic is the foundation of his cosmology—the former is the means, the latter the end. The dialogues, "De la Causa, Principio et Uno." (excellently translated into German by Lasson), are dramatic, not only in outward form, for the thoughts themselves are in a state of dramatic progress. The antithesis between matter and form from which the conversation starts is annulled at the end in the unity of the world-basis.

As regards finite things the principle and the cause are different; the principle

remains inherent in its effect (as a point in a line), the cause remains external to its result : in the infinite this distinction disappears. For the infinite has nothing external to itself, and therefore in it there can be only internal causes, and these must be contained in one single principle. In this manner the aim of the conversation is indicated and its title is explained.

Bruno starts with the distinction between matter and form, but he employs these Aristotelian conceptions only to remodel them dialectically. If by form the natural shapes of things are to be understood, then matter alone seems worthy of the name of principle. This alone persists : the forms change and pass. But besides the perishing derivative forms there is one original, essential form of matter. Bruno teaches that this true inner form of all things is a spiritual force, akin to that which we know in ourselves as reason. He

indicates it, by an expression borrowed from Plato, as the world-soul. It is, he explains, "one identity which fills the All, which enlightens the universe, and instructs Nature to produce her kinds," and which, as if it were an artist, dwelling within the material of his art, creates those fleeting forms of things which float hither and thither on the surface waves of matter, and subside again into its bosom. The existence of each thing is an act of the universal reason : and thus a spiritual force works in all things. For if "they have not life, they nevertheless have soul : if in actuality they are not receptive of either soul or life, yet they are so potentially, and according to their principle, by virtue of an original act of soul-communication and life." This spiritual force in all things is indestructible like matter ; and the form or force is likewise substance ; of it too, the proposition holds ; nothing perishes : everything

changes. Matter and form are thus the two abiding, mutually inseparable principles of all reality, the former as the substratum which is worked upon, the latter as the force which works. But the speculative mind of the philosopher cannot rest in this duality of principles. Matter in itself is intelligible: it is not so much perceived by the senses as comprehended by reason, and belongs therefore to the same category as form. Only finite things from being one thing become another: for them alone is there a difference between possibility and actuality; in the Absolute these coincide. And so the difference between matter and form is one of perception and appearance, not of Being. In itself taken absolutely, there is but one substance: according to substance, all is one.

Not in their being, but in their manner of being, are the things in the universe differentiated from the universe itself.

They are "not several substances, but the one substance in the several particulars." Nature is in detail an endless development; as a whole it is developed infinitely, an inexhaustible realm of living forms and grades of being. Its outward infinity in Time and Space corresponds to the inner essential infinity of its principle. What appears in Nature as unfolded and differentiated must be conceived as perfectly united in its principle. And so the highest being unites all contradictions in undifferentiated unity: the ground of all determinations, it is itself without term, and thus completely simple, limitless, and unchangeable. That which has all colours—to use Bruno's illustration—is itself colourless. Death and destruction, evil and wickedness, have no roots in the groundwork of things: they are neither reality nor power, but rather want and impotence, and are therefore only found in individual things, because

these are not all that they are capable of being, and pass over from one kind of existence to another.

“Thus the universe is a Unity infinite and immovable: One is the absolute possibility, One the actuality, One the form or soul, One the matter or body, One the cause, One the essence, One the highest and best that is incomprehensible, and therefore illimitable and unbounded; therefore endless and boundless and in consequence immovable. Thou dost not come more closely into relation, thou dost not come nearer to the likeness, to the union and identity with the infinite because thou art a man and not an ant: no nearer wouldst thou come wert thou instead of a man a star, and therefore in the infinite these things are not distinguishable.” All which makes for difference and number is mere accident, mere determination in being, while the substance ever remains the same, a divine and deathless essence.

Bruno shows himself less independent and creative in his metaphysical speculations than in his cosmological views. In the latter he sketched a picture of the world which has been confirmed almost line for line by later science: in the former he borrowed Eleatic and Neo-Platonic ideas, thoughts, and even many comparisons direct from Nicolas de Cusa. But the connection of these ideas with the conception of Nature which he had expanded is all his own. Bruno is the Philosopher of Astronomy. A philosophic explanation, or rather interpretation of his generalization of the Copernican system,—this is, in few words, his philosophy. Its leading thought is the infinity of the world. An infinite world must stand in other relation to God than a finite one. The latter may be His creation, the former can only be His effect. And just as effect and cause are necessary correlatives, just as the cause maintains itself

in the effect and cannot be thought without the latter, so God cannot exist without the world, without Nature. The universe is the sublime image and reflex of the divine substance. The creative force in Nature, the world-soul, is an attribute of God, and therefore inseparable from His being. As Bruno finds the heavens everywhere, so he finds in all things the traces of divine power. We are in heaven and heaven in us. "Granted that there is an endless number of individuals, in the end all things are in their nature one, and the knowledge of this unity is the goal of all philosophy and contemplation of Nature." Thus, then, was the theme proclaimed which subsequent speculative philosophy from Spinoza to Hegel took up and developed. Our attitude to-day to all these efforts of metaphysic is a critical one. For us they are systems of belief, not of knowledge. We have learned, from the conjoined develop-

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ment of scientific and of philosophic thought, that limits are set to knowledge. "Man is not born to solve the problems of the world, but to seek where the problems begin, and then to keep himself within the limits of the comprehensible," says Goethe, who nevertheless shared Bruno's belief in the God-Nature.

Bruno stands on the boundary line of two ages. Scientific and philosophic efforts, which after him struck out different ways, were still blended together in his mind. For him speculation and scientific investigation, poetry and knowledge, had not come to the parting of the ways. He gave his fiery imagination full play in the utterance of ideas which certainly transgress the bounds of the knowable; but this may almost be accounted as an advantage of his method in comparison with the presentation of the same ideas by some later philosophers who have written with

more of the appearance than the reality of method.

Bruno's dialogues on moral philosophy are of less importance than his cosmological and even than his metaphysical dialogues: nevertheless they afford us a glance into the Philosopher's own character. "The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast"—ignorantly considered an attack on the Pope on account of its title—is in fact an outline of Ethics and a criticism of Religion in the form of an ingenious allegory. The mean, the wicked, and the weak—in a word, the animal in human nature—is, by the determination of the gods (who, moreover, have themselves to reform), to be driven out of heaven, where it has taken root under the animal names of the Constellations, and is to be superseded by the contrary virtues. As the aspect of the Cosmos has been renewed, so the moral order of the world is to be renewed, and as this aspect has penetrated

to the truth of the one endless universe, so truth is to form the cardinal point of the new moral order. Truth is the unity which prevails everywhere, the highest good which takes precedence of all other things. Therefore she takes the place of the Constellation of the Bear, in whose vicinity is the stellar North Pole. Truth is followed by Wisdom and Prudence—Wisdom by her daughter Law, through whom she will work. Very appropriate is the remark, “Harmony and friendship are not found where it is convenient to believe the same things, but rather where, on the ground of common insight, men unite in the same activity.” For the rest, the enumeration of the remaining moral qualities is without system, and of course the critique of positive religion lacks historical insight.

The Dialogues “On Heroic Enthusiasm” complete Bruno’s social ethics by an ideal of personal conduct. These

are Bruno's "higher morality," the morality for those lofty souls, the few, who are a law to themselves and do the right independently of outward law. The heroic exaltation of the spirit makes it one with the object of its rapturous aspiration and desire, one with the good and divine at the root of things. Man himself becomes godlike by contact with the divine. This enthusiasm is a "soul-flame, kindled at the sun of thought, a godlike passion, which lends us wings wherewith we may approach the sun of knowledge, throwing the mean burden of earthly cares from us." There are two kinds of enthusiasts—the one, the fanatics, exhibit only blindness and unreason: the other experience a certain divine transport, by virtue of which they are ennobled and raised above the common standard. And this kind is again of two sorts: the one consisting of those who are only the instruments of a higher intelligence; the

other, of those who, "disposed towards deeper reflection, of their own inmost impulse and natural ardour of love for the divine, the righteous, the true, and enkindled by conscious effort after the Idea, come to clearer insight and higher powers of thought. These speak and act not as mere instruments of the divine, but rather as self-creative artists and heroes. The former *have* the divine spirit; but the latter *are* divine spirits." We think of Goethe's words, "God is continually active in higher natures to attract the lesser."

In Bruno's philosophy, Ethics also trend in the direction of the universal, the superhuman: through the idea of the homogeneity of all life throughout the universe, the moral laws assume a truly cosmic significance. Not only the physical world, but the moral also, consists of like elements.

III

BRUNO left England at the same time as Castelnau. The recall of the French Ambassador, to whom he had been recommended, naturally occasioned his departure. He did not return to his former relations with the University of Paris. The frequent tumults which preceded the civil war were proving injurious to study ; moreover, Bruno already cherished the intention of visiting other universities, those, namely, in Germany. But he wished to depart as a philosopher, and he prepared himself for a battle royal with the peripatetic natural philosophers, who then exercised a predominant influence. In one hundred and twenty theses, which he delivered to the Rector of the University, he settles with great exactness the points in which his teaching concerning the world and nature is at variance with the Aristotelian. In the expres-

sion of his propositions he attains to a precision which was scarcely excelled in later times even by Spinoza. Permission was granted for the printing of these theses, and their defence was allowed, although some of them were contrary to the Catholic doctrine: for it was held that, leaving entirely on one side all questions as to the truth of matters of revelation and faith, it was permissible to treat these subjects according to the method and principles of natural science. The disputation took place at Whitsuntide (25th May) in the year 1586 — not, however, in the Sorbonne, but in the College of Cambray. Through the mouth of his spokesman, Jean Hennequin of Paris, Bruno enthusiastically extols the discovery of worlds without number and of the one unbounded universe. Nothing he declares, is more despicable than the habit of belief; this more than aught else hinders the human understanding

from insight even into matters which in themselves are clear and open : it is an indication of a mean disposition to wish to think as the multitude, merely because it is the multitude : the opinions of never so many men cannot make Truth other than she is ; and he begged his hearers not to yield to the vehemence of his language but only to the weight of his reasons, and to bend only before the majesty of Truth.

Immediately after this solemn scene Bruno set out for Germany. In Marburg, contrary to the academic custom of the times, permission to give lectures was denied him ; on the other hand, in Wittenberg, "the German Athens," he was generously welcomed. Albericus Gentilis was teaching here : he was a compatriot of Bruno and one of the founders of the science of international law, a knowledge of which he had brought hither from Oxford.¹ But

¹ Albericus Gentilis came to Oxford in 1580,

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the other professors also treated him as a colleague and opened their houses to him ; although, as he himself declared, he had hitherto been quite unknown to them, had no recommendations, had given no proof of adhesion to their faith, and was an opponent of the philosophy to which they adhered. Only the Calvinistic party in the University remained ill-disposed to him. And when, after the death of the Elector Augustus, this party obtained the upper hand under his successor Christian, Bruno was compelled to withdraw after

went to Wittenberg in 1586, and returned to Oxford in 1587, when he was then made Regius Professor of Civil Law. At Oxford Gentilis revived the study of the Civil Law, which there "had reached a very low ebb by the middle of the sixteenth century." There can, says Professor Holland, "be no doubt that the teaching of Gentilis, coming as he did direct from the original seat of civilian study, and bringing with him traditions handed down from master to pupil in unbroken series since the days of Irnerius, must have done much to revive the interest felt in Roman Law."—An Inaugural Lecture on Albericus Gentilis, by T. E. Holland, B.C.L. London, 1874.—A. F.

lecturing for nearly two years on different branches of philosophy, and bringing out a number of writings on Lully. In his farewell discourse to the Senate and University, he magnifies the spiritual greatness of Germany, which formerly he scarcely knew except as a land of hard drinking (*Alemagna bibace*). The Germans—so he announces with prophetic vision—would become leaders in science. Hither Wisdom had transplanted her seat from Greece and Italy, and here she was making ready the ground for her new kingdom. “May Jove grant the Germans to know their powers and to direct them to loftier aims; then will they be men no longer, but like to the gods. For godlike indeed is their genius which lights up the path of all the sciences, save only those which they have hitherto disdained to cultivate.” He has high praise also for Luther, whom he calls the new Alcides, one who, mightier

than Hercules, has vanquished that most pernicious and horrible monster, the Cerberus crowned with the triple tiara. And his club, he adds, was the pen.

From Wittenberg Bruno went to Prague, where he sought in vain for a position and means of livelihood. He dedicated to the Emperor Rudolph II. a paper, "Against the Mathematicians and Philosophers of this Age," and in this dedication he confesses himself an adherent of the religion of love to all men, the religion which is raised above all controversy. But this dedication only procured him a gracious gift from the Emperor, and, after a stay of several months, he resolved to move to Helmstadt, where the Duke Julius of Brunswick had founded a new and promising university. Bruno's stay in Helmstadt lasted one year, during which the Duke died, and the University, the Julian Academy, honoured the memory of its

founder by a solemn mourning, in which even Bruno took part with an "Oratio Consolatoria." It was not chance, he said, but the hand of Fate which had brought him hither after so many dangers and tribulations. An exile from his country for the sake of truth, he was received here as a citizen : there a prey to the hungry vengeance of the Roman wolf—here he might live in freedom and safety. But the hopes which he thus expressed were not to be fulfilled. This time it was the persecuting zeal of a Lutheran pastor which put an end to his teaching ere it had well begun. The Superintendent of Helmstadt, one Boëthius, excommunicated him before the assembled congregation ; and the Rector of the University, the theologian Hofmann, being either unable or unwilling to protect him, he was once more compelled to seek a new abode. He chose Frankfort-am-Main, the Leipzig of that age, intending to com-

plete and print his Latin works here. He immediately put himself in connection with the celebrated publishers, J. Weckel and P. Fisher, who procured accommodation for him in the Carmelite monastery without the town, when the council refused him permission to lodge within it. In this monastery Bruno was entirely occupied with his works ; at any hour of the day he might be found writing or meditating in his cell, and his incessant creative activity was only interrupted by the instruction which he gave to certain "heretical doctors" in Lully's art, and by a visit of some length to Zurich, where he went as teacher at the request of several young men. The Carmelite Prior subsequently asserted that "he was a man of universal intelligence and well versed in all sciences, but without a trace of religion"—the Carmelite Prior's own religion, to wit.

Of the works which followed one an-

other in rapid succession at Frankfurt, the connected group of writings dedicated to Duke Henry Julius of Brunswick calls for special attention. These are: "The three-fold Minimum," "The Monads, Number and Shape," "The Immeasurable and the Countless Worlds." In the first work, Bruno teaches that that same Power which unfolds itself into the infinite Universe lives also, in its smallest fraction, in every element the substance of which it constitutes. Accordingly it is of the same kind in the greatest and in the least. The Universe itself would be annihilated if the least constituent part, the smallest atom, could be destroyed. Nature is a living unity of living units, in each of which the power of the whole is present: almost the same thoughts occur again later in the works of Leibnitz. Bruno even uses the expression Monad of Monads to denote the creative source of things, but in connection

with his philosophy its meaning is more profound.

The work on the "Seven Liberal Arts" (of which we shall speak later) was also begun and completed at this time. Bruno took it in manuscript with him to Venice; but he was not destined to see it published.

The Frankfort fair was largely attended by foreign booksellers, especially Italians. On one such occasion Bruno made the acquaintance of the Venetian booksellers Bertano and Ciotto, and the latter carried back some of Bruno's writings to Venice. Lying in Ciotto's shop, these came under the notice of a young noble, Giovanni Mocenigo, who at once inquired, in a manner that was noticeably eager, where the writer lived, and expressed the wish to be initiated by him in the art of memory and other secret sciences with which he conceived that Bruno was acquainted.

Giovanni Mocenigo, who was at this

time thirty-two years old, came of one of the most distinguished Venetian families, which had already furnished four doges to the Republic. Naturally of a shy and undecided character, suspicious and reticent, he had given himself up as a mere tool into the hand of his spiritual director. He had already served once as "savio all'eresia" (Deputy of the High Council at the trials before the Holy Office), and had thus become intimate with the practices of the Inquisition. This wretch now insinuated himself into Bruno's life. He invited him repeatedly to come to Venice, and promised him treatment that should satisfy him. Both invitations came through Ciotto. Bruno found them on his return from Zurich, and, in his embarrassed condition, he arrived at the fateful determination to go whither they called him. It was not the longing after home, that "heaven-blessed land" whose charms he could paint in such

living colours, it was not this alone that moved him to the step that was to seal his fate. To the child of the Sun and of Mother Earth, as he once called himself, to him whose spirit expatiated in the contemplation of Infinity, "the closest place of exile became the widest Fatherland." But—might he not think himself safe under the protection of the mighty Republic and of one of her most respected houses? And could he refuse an offer that would relieve him for a little time at least of care and poverty? No friendly adviser stood beside him with warning words, and so the man, who for all his contentiousness and vehemence was yet simple and unsuspecting, fell into the snare that deceit had laid for him. Skill in the conduct of life is mostly denied to those whose lives are not for their own time alone, but for many centuries.

At first all seemed to promise well. Bruno arrived in Venice October 1591,

and at once took possession of a lodging. The instruction of Mocenigo began, but was not imparted with any great regularity; and Bruno found time to pay a visit of some months to Padua, in order to give private lectures to German students. The "Studium" in Padua was greatly celebrated at this time, and numbered among its scholars many illustrious names in science and in art. Copernicus came there at the beginning of the sixteenth century, P.P. Rubens at the conclusion of it, and only a few months after Bruno had left Padua, Galileo, summoned from Pisa, began to teach here (September 1592), the creator of modern science following hard on its prophet. In March 1592 Bruno removed again to Venice, and this time he was misled into taking up his abode in his pupil's own house. He was seen much at the booksellers' shops, and he was a welcome guest at the literary and philosophic societies which gathered

round Andrea Morosini. When he considered that he had instructed his scholar in all that he had been called upon to teach him, he planned to return to Frankfort to proceed with the printing of his works, and desired permission to depart. But Mocenigo had not been satisfied with the instruction which he had received : he had waited in vain for the initiation into magic arts and sciences, with which he presumed Bruno to be familiar, and for which—just because his creed had surrounded them with prohibition and terror—he cherished a secret yearning, not unmixed with aversion. He therefore refused his permission, and he let fall the threat, that if Bruno did not stay of his own accord, he knew means to compel him to do so. How greatly must Bruno have misunderstood his position when he could reply that he had no fears of the Inquisition, for he had prevented no one from living according to their

own belief. Strange as it may appear to us, Bruno did not consider his breach with the Church as final. Again and again in Toulouse and in Paris he had endeavoured to reconcile himself with the Church, and at this very time he placed great hopes in his work on the "Seven Liberal Arts." He wished to present it to the new pope Clement VIII., whom he thought favourably inclined to the sciences, and he designed thereby to obtain absolution, and to be received again into the Church without the necessity of returning to his order. But events were to fall out very differently from his expectations. He was firm in his decision to depart, and ordered his baggage to be sent to Frankfurt. Mocenigo had therefore not a moment to lose in effecting his treacherous design. Followed by a servant and five or six gondoliers, who were at hand near his palace, he made a pretext for bursting into the sleeping chamber

of his teacher during the night of 22nd May 1592, forced him to rise from his bed, and with his own hand locked him into a room on the upper storey of the house. The next day an officer of the Holy Office appeared with several attendants, and for greater security confined the prisoner in a warehouse, on the ground level. On the same day Mocenigo handed in his written denunciation to the Inquisitor, and during the night Bruno was dragged to the prison of the Inquisition.

The *reports* of the Venetian trial have come down intact to us, and have been repeatedly published, since Ranke first discovered them several decades ago.

The Court of Justice, "the holy tribunal," consisted of the Father Inquisitor Fra Giovanni Gabrielle da Saluzzo, the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignore Ludovico Taberna, the Patriarch of Venice Lorenzo Priuli, and one of the three "savii all' eresia," whose duty it was to

superintend the legality of the proceedings and to report upon them to the High Council. The booksellers Ciotto and Bertano appeared as witnesses. Andrea Morosini was also heard.

Mocenigo's accusation, which he completed in two later writings, is as much the work of an evil-disposed nature as of a bewildered mind. Nor is it easy to discover, from its confused enumeration of separate accusations, how much actually rests upon Bruno's declaration, and how much, on the other hand, Mocenigo had misheard. Almost at the head of the accusation stands the doctrine of the boundlessness of the universe, and the plurality of worlds. The assertion which is laid to Bruno's charge, that animal, and even human, life arises from putrefaction, is doubtless only a misunderstanding of his bold theory of the natural origin of all organisms. For the philosopher who had dared to assume several origins for the human race knew

but one distinction between human and animal life, that of development and not that of essence. No doubt Bruno is rightly charged with denying the dogma that the Son of God became man. We know that he had early doubts about the ecclesiastical dogma of the Trinity, but he most solemnly denied the irreverent expressions concerning the person and miracles of Christ which Mocenigo puts into his mouth ; and Mocenigo would not be the first hypocrite who, in supposed zeal for religion, has had recourse to lies. And the wild scheme attributed to Bruno of raising a general revolution in concert with Henry of Navarre, of putting himself at its head and seizing other kingdoms as opportunity offered, is one of those lying inventions which betray themselves as such. What estimate must Mocenigo have formed of the judges, if he ventured to come before them with tales such as these ? He also averred that Bruno had expressed his

surprise that the Republic, so wise in other respects, should leave the monks in the enjoyment of their enormous revenues, and not have confiscated them as had been done in France. This was a most malicious part of the information, and admirably calculated to prejudice the judges, of whom one at least was a monk. And the great thinker had to clear himself from accusations of this sort, brought against him by his mean-souled enemy.

The trial began on 29th May, and was continued on the 30th. The accused gave information concerning himself and recounted his life, and not until the following hearing of 2nd June was the matter of the accusation entered upon. Bruno laid before the court a complete list of his published writings, some of which he still maintained, others he no longer defended. Their contents, he explained, were exclusively philosophical, and were treated according to the

principles of natural science. They had no direct concern at any rate with the Catholic religion, and they did not, therefore, presuppose the truth according to the Faith, as the University of Paris had recognized when they permitted his theses to be printed. After this Bruno unfolded his philosophic doctrines in a summary recital, neither concealing nor weakening any essential feature, but treating them as frankly as if he were in a professor's chair and not before the judgment seat of the Inquisition. He taught an endless universe, because he deemed it unworthy to think that divine goodness and omnipotence had produced a finite world where worlds without number might have been created. And so he had declared that there were infinite worlds like this world of ours, which, together with the other planets, he held to be a star. And in this universe he placed a universal providence, by virtue of which

everything lives and grows and comes to its perfection, and this providence he conceived of in two ways, first as the soul is present in the body, which he calls Nature, the shadow and impress of the Deity, and again in that ineffable manner in which God is at the same time in all and over all. He concedes that so long as he confines himself within the limits of philosophy he does not understand how the Word became flesh, and his belief in it is also uncertain. As a philosopher he agrees with Solomon in understanding by the Holy Spirit, the world-soul. From this Spirit, this All-life, life and soul flow to every being that has life and soul. The soul is deathless as the body is imperishable: death is division and re-vivification. And so the word of the Preacher is to be understood: "There is nothing new under the sun."

In his defence Bruno relied upon the doctrine of a duality of truth, accord-

ing to which Philosophy and Theology, Science and Faith may exist together even when they maintain contrary doctrines. It is true that this teaching had already been condemned by the Lateran Council of 1512 as heretical: but Rome herself had not always held fast by this determination of the Council. By an appeal to this principle, Pomponatius had obtained from the Roman Censor the release of his work on the immortality of the soul in 1516; and in Bruno's case the University of Paris had acknowledged the proposition in question as still valid. We can therefore understand how it is that Bruno continually recurs to the fact that what he taught, he asserted as a philosopher, without pronouncing in any way upon his faith as a Christian. When the Inquisitor interrogated him concerning his belief, he replied throughout as a Catholic. "What did he believe of the Incarnation of the Word, and His

Birth?" "That the Word was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary." "What things are necessary to salvation?" "Faith, hope and love"; and so on, concerning the sacrament of Penance, the transformation of the elements in the Mass, and the Church's commands regarding abstinence. In a word, Bruno answered as if he were repeating a lesson out of the Roman catechism. But the Inquisition let none who had fallen into its power escape so cheaply. At the end of the long sitting the Inquisitor turned to the accused, and in impressive language charged him point by point with the whole accusation as though he had done nothing to clear himself of it; and he added that if Bruno continued stubbornly to gainsay those things of which he might afterwards be convinced, it must be no matter of surprise to him if the Holy Office proceeded against him with those

judicial measures which it was its habit and its power to employ against those obdurate offenders who refused to acknowledge the mercy of God, and the Christian love of the Holy Office, by virtue of which it was solicitous to turn to the light those who wandered in darkness, and to bring back to the way of everlasting life those who had strayed from the right path.

Bruno understood the threat which these words contained. On the following day (3rd June) he proved more docile than ever; nay, he was crushed. He was examined concerning his relation to Henry of Navarre:—Mocenigo's slander was evidently working. Bruno denied any acquaintance with the King of Navarre. Next he must vindicate his praise of the heretic Queen of England. He excused this as a mere rhetorical flourish, after the fashion of antiquity. Finally he furnished an explanation which comes very near to a

complete recantation. He declared that he now rejected and abhorred all errors which he had held until that day contrary to the Catholic Faith and his monastic vows, and all heresies of which he might have been guilty ; he repented of all he had done, held, said, believed or doubted which was not Catholic ; and he begged that the holy tribunal, having regard to his weakness, would provide him with fit means to be received again into the Church, and would let mercy prevail. The following day another short sitting was held ; then followed a pause of eight weeks—time enough for the “*examen rigorosum*” and the rack, which was generally used in the case of those whose conversion was too rapid. It was not until 30th July that Bruno again appeared before his judges. He explained that it was possible that, in his long separation from the Church, he might have fallen into other errors than those he

had confessed, though he could not call any such to mind, and falling on his knees he broke out into words of entreaty: "I humbly beseech God and your lordships to forgive all errors which I have committed, and I am ready here to do what your wisdom has determined and ordained for my soul's good. And if God and your lordships show pity to me, and grant me my life, I promise to alter my life in the sight of all men, and to make good all the evil that I have done." With this the proceedings at Venice came to a conclusion without any sentence being pronounced. The records of the trial were transmitted to Rome, and there it was decided, as early as 17th September, to demand that Bruno should be sent thither. Bruno was no ordinary heretic, but a leader of heretics, an heresiarch; he had written several books in which he had bestowed rare praise on the Queen of England and other heretical

rulers ; he had been a Dominican, and had spent several years wandering in Geneva and in England ; he had been already summoned before the Inquisition in Naples and elsewhere, and therefore it was expedient that at the first safe opportunity he should be sent to Ancona and thence to Rome. The vessel for Ancona was ready to sail, and the Inquisitor pressed for a decision. But the High Council of Venice could not come to an immediate resolution, and so the vessel had to leave without the prisoner ; and the Senate, writing to the ambassador at Rome on 3rd October, refused to surrender him, being reluctant to yield its rights to gratify the wishes of the Curia. Rome, however, repeated the demand so much the more urgently, alleging that Bruno as a friar must come under the Pope's jurisdiction. Finally, on 7th January, the High Council yielded to the wishes of his Holiness.

This conclusion was brought about by the advice of Contarini, who, after rehearsing the principles which had prevailed with the Curia, added further that Bruno had long lived in heretical lands, and during all this time had led a wanton and diabolical life. He was guilty of heresy of the deepest dye—otherwise, however, his was one of the most remarkable minds imaginable, of excellent learning and wide knowledge. How strange and yet how entirely in keeping with the spirit of the times are these words, in which amazement at the intellectual greatness of the man mingles with superstitious horror of his heresy !

His Holiness the Pope—so the Venetian ambassador announced from Rome on 16th January—spoke of the decision of the Republic as “a matter most gratifying to himself, and one for which he will not fail to show himself grateful.” On 27th February 1593 Bruno reached

Rome ; he exchanged the prison of the Inquisition in Venice for the prison in Rome. Nearly seventeen years had passed since his flight, and he was in the forty-fifth year of his age.

Bruno arrived in Rome determined to renew the recantation which he had proffered in Venice ; and this makes his long detention and the slow conclusion of the trial so much the more surprising. On the other hand, we may remember that it was not contrary to the custom of the Holy Office to delay its decisions. In the list of Bruno's fellow prisoners of 5th April 1599 (they are twenty in number, and among them seven priests and monks) we find the name of one who had been imprisoned nearly two years ; but Bruno was the only one who had passed six years in a dungeon. It is only by conjecture that we can explain his long imprisonment ; but these guesses are confirmed by the accounts of Schop-

pius,—indeed, they almost acquire the value of ascertained facts. Kaspar Schoppe (Latinized into Scioppius or Schoppius) had become a Catholic in his youth, and was made a Knight of St. Peter and Count of Claravalle by Clement VIII. ; he was a literary busy-body, and is the only contemporary witness of Bruno's end who has left an account of it. He narrates that Bruno was convinced of his errors by the greatest theologians, and promised to recant, but always, so soon as he had given his promise, he returned to the defence of his "empty fancies," and so he contrived to procure one delay after another, and to defer the sentence. What Schoppius placed in a short space of time—he thought that Bruno had only been in confinement since 1598—really extended over the long series of years of his imprisonment in Rome. Moreover, the assertion that Bruno had been convinced of error

requires correction. The very fact that he continued to defend his doctrine proves the contrary. In truth, it was just these efforts to convince him which were the cause that prevented him from making a submission such as the Holy Office required—a submission without reserve, without vacillation, without one longing glance backward at his former intellectual convictions, at the glory of the infinite world, as his mind had perceived it. Bruno was not only to be urged to recant; he had recanted and was ready to repeat the recantation. His sentiments were to be changed; his great intelligence was to be captured; his name, his learning, his pen were to be at the service of the creed of the Church. And therefore it was that his philosophy was attacked. But how should his mind, which had soared among vast solar spaces, creep back into the narrow limits of the Aristotelian mediæval

world? While his opponents sought to convince him, they did but strengthen his convictions. Then all his uncertainty vanished, all that doubt of himself which none can escape who struggles single-handed against the tendency of his time and environment. Bruno did not enter his prison heroically ; he first appears as a hero when he leaves it. Only by degrees did he rise above that deferential attitude of the early days of his imprisonment which had been so unworthy of him ; only by slow steps could he escape from his overwhelming embarrassments and win that inner harmony and therewith that enduring strength which he kept to the end. The sight of his human weakness brings him nearer to us as a man, and makes the sacrifice of his life appear the greater. Even in his own mind the right to entertain free conviction and the new conception of things had first to struggle for supremacy against

the power of his own early impressions, a power which grew with his own intellectual growth. His relation to the Catholic Church is not that of simple denial. He denies the Church's scheme of belief, but he can hardly withdraw himself from her influence on mind and spirit. He imports into his new conception of the world much of the religious sentiment and feeling of the older idea, and however much he may find to censure in the Catholic religion, it is to him, as even Mocenigo was constrained to testify, "ever the dearest." And when this Church appeared as his judge, he wavered and was swayed by conflicting impulses, and from this indecision he had to deliver himself by a struggle of many years' duration before he could take his place finally on the side of that power whose spiritual victory his bodily death betokened. In this inner conflict how often must his mind have turned to his own words:

“Whoso still fears for his life has not yet made himself one with the Godhead.” It is not until the beginning of the year 1599 that we catch another glimpse of the prisoner who had been so long lost to knowledge. A number of cardinals belonged to the “Congregation of the Holy Office” of the Roman and general Inquisition, and prominent among these were Ludovico Madruzzi and the Cardinal of San Severina, the latter an intolerant and ambitious man, who considered the “Bloody Wedding” of Paris (the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew) “a glorious day, and one exceeding agreeable to Catholics.” Among the consultors, Robert Bellarmine deserves special notice. He was commissioned to examine into Bruno’s teaching, and he did most to secure his condemnation. During twenty years Bellarmine embodied the opposition of the Curia to science, and later on he took upon himself the chief part in the first trial

of Galileo. On the 14th January Belarmine laid before the congregation eight heretical propositions, which he had culled from Bruno's writings. The Congregation determined to require Bruno to abjure these propositions, and at the same time ordered that their number should be completed. And, indeed, we can but wonder to find them so few. Three weeks later, after examining the Congregation, the Pope ordained that these propositions should be pointed out to the accused as heretical. "If he acknowledges them as such, well; if not, a period of forty days shall be fixed for him." The time of grace expired without decision, and not till 21st December was Bruno brought up at a general inspection of the prisoners and heard on this matter. His firm declaration that "he neither dared nor would retract, that he had nothing to retract, and knew not what he should retract," hastened the catastrophe. It

was in vain that the Congregation sent the General of his Order, Ippolita Maria, and his Vicar Paul of Mirandola, to dispute with him. Bruno refused to acknowledge as heretical the propositions pointed out to him, and added in a dejected way that he had never given utterance to heretical propositions, but his words had been misapprehended by the officials of the Holy Office. On 20th January 1600, a year of jubilee in Rome, the decisive sitting took place. A memorial of Bruno to the Pope was opened, but left unread. After the Pope had received the Congregation in audience, he ordered that, without further consideration, sentence should be pronounced, and that brother Jordanus should be delivered over to the secular power. Before the assembled congregation, and in presence of the magistrates and the governor of Rome, the sentence in conformity with this conclusion was announced on 8th Feb-

ruary. Bruno was compelled to kneel to hear the announcement of his sentence. He was degraded (*i.e.* his orders were taken from him), then excommunicated, and thereupon given up to the secular power, with the usual request that he should be “dealt with as gently as might be, and punished without the shedding of blood”—that is to say, sentenced to be burnt. In order rightly to appreciate this proceeding, we need to remember that in papal Rome there was no difference between the spiritual and the temporal power; the governor of Rome, to whom Bruno was delivered, was an officer of the Pope and a Monsignor. After hearing the sentence, Bruno rose proudly, and turning with a threatening mien to the judges, spoke words which after three hundred years echo still: “It is with far greater fear that you pronounce, than I receive, this sentence.”

On 12th February, as the “avvisi” of

the day inform us, a most solemn execution of justice was expected in Rome: a Dominican of Nola, a stiff-necked heretic, was to be burnt alive ; but the pious sightseers had to wait in patience a few days longer. A last opportunity for recantation was granted to Bruno ; and the chance was offered him of purchasing death before burning : but his steadfastness, or, as his enemies conceived it, his obstinacy, was unassailable. “I die a martyr’s death,” he declared, “and I die willingly, knowing that with the smoke my soul will ascend to Paradise.” On Friday, 17th February, in the early hours of the morning, one of those sad processions of state prisoners which were not unfamiliar in Rome was seen wending its way to the Campo di Fiora, the place of execution for heretics. Bruno was led to the pile : he was clad as a heretic, and his tongue was bound lest he should utter “revilings” against the Church. And now there went

before him those torches, of which he himself had foretold that they would not be wanting to him even in clear daylight if he was destined to die on Roman Catholic soil.

Little sympathy was likely to be felt for him among the crowd which streamed together ; a sentence of this kind was quite in consonance with the sentiment of the time. Schoppius looked scornfully at him ; he must have pressed into the foremost row of sight-seers, so exactly does he describe Bruno's last moments. Bruno was bound to the stake, round which the wood was piled ; the flames wrapped round about him, but the fearful torment did not wring one sigh from his breast, as living and seeing he was slowly consumed. And when, in his last agony, a crucifix was held before his eyes, it is said that he turned away.

What seems to us the death of a hero was a miserable and shameful end in

the eyes of his contemporaries. "And so," writes Schoppius joyfully, "he perished miserably in the flames, and in those other words which he imagined, he can narrate how the Romans are wont to treat such blasphemous and profligate folk as himself."

Bruno's ashes were scattered to the winds, and his very name was proscribed. Campanella mentions him but once, and not by name, only as "a certain Nolan." But Kepler in Germany, who was akin to Bruno in so many ways, mentions him repeatedly. Galileo is silent concerning him, in order not to prejudice his own case still further. And so it could come to pass that the first philosopher of the modern mind, the prophet of the scientific idea of the world, was soon almost unknown, and his works numbered among the greatest rarities, and we must therefore be very careful of accusing later writers of borrowing from them. Moreover,

the paths of later philosophy and science have been very different from those pursued by Bruno's prophetic spirit, however near their goal may be.

Bruno died for the same truth for which Galileo was also to suffer. His trial contains the germ of Galileo's; at the head of the heresies of which he was found guilty stands the doctrine of the plurality of worlds, as even Schoppius rightly perceived. Not the earth's motion, but rather the plurality of worlds, is absolutely irreconcilable with the literal understanding of the creed of the Church. Have the dwellers in the other worlds also sprung from Adam?—the question was triumphantly put to Galileo: was Christ crucified for them too? It might have been thought that even without this heresy Bruno's case was a hopeless one. Was he not an apostate, a backslider, a friar who had forsaken his order? cause

enough at least to condemn him to a life-long prison. But, on the other hand, it was precisely his conception of the universe which had occasioned his secession from the Church ; it was this which neither he nor his judges could pass over. His persistent adherence to this rendered the recantation he had already made worthless in the eyes of the Inquisitors, and prevented him from recanting in the way that they demanded. And so, in very truth, Bruno ascended the pile a victim to his scientific convictions, a martyr to the new conception of the Universe.

There is no authentic portrait of Bruno,¹ but we know that he was a short man, of slight build and pallid countenance. His brown beard was sparse, and lighter than his hair ; his deep-set eyes had a melancholy look. His movements

¹ Wagner's edition of Bruno's work has a portrait said to be of the author ; and so has Frith's life. But the authority for those portraits does not appear.—A. F.

were very lively, and it is impossible to read his dialogues and not fancy his accompanying gesticulations. His temperament was in many ways characteristic of the South Italian ; he was excitable and impetuous, and his impulsive nature was often led by the impressions of a moment. In details, therefore, he sometimes lacks that continuity which in the main outlines of his life he so finely displayed. He was easily wearied : and “ *il fastidio* ” is the name which he bestowed on himself. “ *In fastidio hilaris, in hilaritate tristis* ”—thus he characterizes the nature of his mind. And he certainly saw through all the mean motives, and the petty intrigues, the vanity and persecuting zeal of the fraternity “ who make a trade of philosophy.” Even early in life he longed for “ the end to the stormy work, the bed, the quiet rest and sure repose ” of death. Yet his spirit is free from pessimism. He chides vulgarity, or

lashes it with satiric scorn ; but his glance is directed to the whole in which he sees all imperfection in the details vanish ; out of the very difference and opposition to things he hears the full harmony arise. The thought of this universal harmony lifts him above all suffering.

The feeling for reality was born in him. He divines its character immediately, and intuitively, and loses himself in it. It was certainly premature in his age to accept the Copernican system as an established truth. But Nature revealed herself even to his speculations, as his cosmology proved. It is significant that he turns with preference to poetry to give form and expression to his teaching, and his thoughts seem to arise originally in a poetic form.

Bruno was no mere thinker : in life, a poet, a seer, and an apostle ; in death he was a martyr and a hero. No coming century—so he prophesies of himself—

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will refuse to bear witness that like a conqueror he did not fear death, but with a steadfastness great as that of any hero, preferred a courageous death to an inglorious life. Bruno had the loftiest conception of his calling. God has chosen him as the servant of a nobler age ; God has kindled an immortal flame in his mortal breast, and filled his mind with a clear light and his soul with a warm glow.

“ For touched by Divinity, thou wilt become a flaming fire.”

Time has done justice to Bruno's memory. It has reversed the judgment of the Inquisition. Three centuries ago Bruno died, cursed by the Church and execrated by men.

But since 1889 his monument stands on the Campo di Fiora, on the spot where, in the year 1600, the faggots blazed. But more imperishable than this visible monument is that invisible

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one raised by Bruno himself in the greatness of his mind and character, which stand before the coming world, a monition and an example.

